Dear Davé, 8/17/91

Confirming what I've been saying about the Arab world engaging in the reverse of Clausewitz are two stories in today's Post. Both are signed, both offer opinions, and neither offers any pro-Israeli opinion or anti-Arab opinion. Both misrepresent the Israeli position. Neither makes any comment about the utter outrageousness of some of the Arab demands.

Nora Boustany is an excellent reporter based for some time in Beirut. Should she write about the present situation and impsse not only might she be in physical danger, she would also, as the Post well knows, lose most if not all her Arab sources.

"Cerlic Urges Washington To Put Pressure on Israel" is the headline on her story. The subhead is "Fadlallah: U.S. Delaying Release of Hostages." This is to day he is also making his own kind of war against Bush.

Fadlallah has long been so much of a leader of terrorism that the CIA's people who intended assassinating him got the wrong people.. The only description of him and his position/role by Boustany is as "the Muslim cleric closely linked by Washington to the kidnappers of 11 Western hostages." For all the world as though he is an impartial man only of religion she reports that he "charged today that the United States was delaying further hostage releases by fabling to pressure Israel into releasing Arab prisoners."

Without her own comment she quotes him as saying that the Israelis held by Arabs is not comparable to the Israeli holding of Arab prisoners. (As indeed it isn't, only in a different sence. The Arabs are the prisoners of a government, the Israelis and hostages are the prisoners of terrorist gangs.)

Bustany and the papers make no reference to the U.S. position with regard to the reports that after two deaades there are U.S. corpses to be located in Vietnam and returned and if the irrational are listened to, still living Americans.)

In her own names Boustany writes, without attribution to ever a monster dressed like a cleric, that Israel "has not been willing to make even a token unilateral gesture to the Syrians and Lebanese groups by releasing some of its nearly 400 Lebanese prisoners, even if that could lead(sic) to the release of all hostages." "Even", "could" and as used "lead" are conditionals for which except in extreme use of "lead" is from clear history deceptive and misleading. Like when Israel not so long ago did release 40-50, not mentioned in either story, neither of which is short or lacked the space. I'm sorry, that is in the other story, by Jackson Diehl.

Boustany does say that Israel is "demanding information on sven seven Israeli servicemen lost in Lebanon..." But she does not say what is public, that in return for just information Israel said it would make token releases of some of its prisoners.

In saying that both Israel and Arabs "are playing the game that is rapidly transforming the area's politics as well as the peace process [into] a contest and use U.S. influence in regional power struggles"

what Diehl is really saying is the Arabs have this intent because Israel began with what he says they seek. They do not have to. They have to avoid losing it. That is what the Arab game is, the make that change, for the U.S. to support them rather than Israel.

Any perceptive reading of either story, despite their omissions and partisanship disguised as impartial reporting, makes it clear that the Arabs are playing games with the hostages and with so-called Peace, which they not want, that entailing recognizing Israel and its right to exist, or intend.

As Fadlallah makes it clear in what undoubtedly got wide distribution to Arab masses as well as governments, they hold Bush responsible for their own crimes, beginning with the taking of those hostages and continuing by continuing to hold them as hostages. They have no guilt at all. Only Bush and Israel do.

Diehl reports that neither Syria nor Iran have applied any pressures to the groups they influebce, if not control, for them to do anything at all, least of all disclose any information on any Israeli captives, dead or alive.

Diehl does report what I interpreted Assad's interview with the Post as meaning, that he expectes as a condition of going to any peace conference one of the presumed matters for negotiation (Arabs presume there is nothing to begotiate, if their statements are read with care, involving any concession by them) be upfront. He says Assad has "made clear that he expects the Bush administration to respond by forcing Israel to return the occupied Golan Heights."

The more anything is said by any ARab spokesman and the more all are treated elsewhere as dependable, reasonable people, the more confused and impossible even the prelude to a peace conference becomes along with the seeming impossibility of the prelude itself, release of hostages.

It is clear that these Arabs quoted as trying to persuade Americans among others that Bush is responsible for their being held hostage because Israel alone is at fault (and it had nothing to do with the hostage taking) and thus the U.S. is responsible because it has not compelled Israel to comply with impossible and unreasonable Arab demands and interpretations, including even of what "terrorism" is .